

Sustaining and Maintaining Center Leadership in the Community

Presenters:

Karen Lincoln, Ph.D., USC Professor of Social Work

Joyce Hayes, Executive Director, Humboldt Senior Resource Center

Joe O'Hehir, CEO, Whistlestop

Moderator: **Virgie Walker**, Commissioner, California Commission on Aging

Karen Lincoln, Ph.D.: Overview of Aging Population; theme of thinking strategically.

Challenge centers on how to provide services. Challenges of the last two years are unprecedented; LAUSD was providing instructors for senior classes; budget cuts eliminated programs for seniors first.

Socialization/prevention are critical to healthy aging, yet programs are being cut. Services provided at senior centers are now more than ever critically important. How to provide services for Baby Boomers?

2000 Census age distribution & median age results: Aging population is increasing. Ratio between seniors and younger population is dropping. More diverse population of older adults. Significant increase in racial/minority populations projected through 2050.

2010 Census showed a 50% increase in multiracial children; mostly black/white.

As of 2009, net worth of older adults was highest of any age group (\$170,000); major economic disparity among races. African American and Latino groups have the highest representation at or just above the poverty line; African Americans have fewer assets with overwhelming proportion of income from Social Security.

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System tracks 350,000 and provides important data for policy development.

Past 20 years saw a dramatic increase in obesity; rates remain at epidemic proportions in the US and worldwide across all age groups. Obesity related to low hand grip strength for adults age 55 and over.

A Minority Aging Pilot Survey by the Roybal Institute on Aging looked at age 60+ in East L.A., Boyle Heights, northeast L.A., Crenshaw, Hawthorne and Inglewood. East L.A. is predominantly Hispanic; south L.A. is more diverse. Changes since the economic crisis: 38% have lost jobs; more Latinos and African Americans are living alone. General health is poorer among minority groups. Higher psychological distress in south L.A. Women have higher ADL limitations; of those with limitations, fewer than 50% have help.

Survey results indicate that services for seniors are very important. National, state, and local data are useful in understanding and developing strategies for whom and how we currently serve, who will be served in the future, and who will serve them.

Joyce Hayes: Sustaining and Maintaining Humboldt Senior Resource Center's Leadership; Key Strategies for Getting Through Difficult Economic Times. County encompasses 2.3 million acres; mostly rural with total population of 134,000. 35 people per square acre, with 6 seniors per square acre. The area is rich in senior services.

Humboldt Senior Resource Center (HSRC) has been operating for 37 years. The organization's mission is to help people stay independent and maintain their quality of life, dignity and determination.

HSRC has experienced a drastic reduction in funding and resources.

Strategies for success both internally and externally.

Internal:

- Flexibility / adaptability
- Talented / experienced staff
- Environment to ask critical questions about what needs to be done in the community and how to manage the organization.

External:

- Importance of communication and established relationships
- Value of partnerships
- Benefit of embracing innovation and new ideas

Bright Spots:

- Higher multi-year contributions from individuals and foundations for core operating expenses
- Created partnerships for sharing space and collaborative efforts led to a new multi-generational center
- Developed and submitted the application to become one of the first rural counties in California to provide a PACE program. None exist in rural California; working with an organization in San Francisco to determine feasibility

Strategies:

- Embrace new ways of doing things
- Focus on the future
- Be creative

Joe O'Hehir, CEO, Whistlestop Senior Center, Marin County

Start looking at senior center operations as a business; management, marketing and finance. His perspective is that the difference between for-profit/non-profit organization is on a tax return.

Whistlestop established in 1954. Marin County is the second oldest county in California. An organization's history changes as the environment changes. Core services include transportation, nutrition, information and help desk; offer "Active Aging Services" rather than "senior center" services.

Paratransit: transportation funded at \$4.7 million.

Marin County Foundation grant donations provide \$1 million support for active aging center.

Centers need more of a balanced portfolio. 90% of Whistlestop's funding is earned revenue. Eight services generate most of the revenue. You must know the cost per unit of services.

Multicultural programs/services are important. English as a second language classes are most popular. Program serves empty nesters who don't speak English; isolated and need to get them into the community. 75% of clients are women; Marin County has 13,000 older women living alone. Whistlestop's website is used mainly by children of aging adults.

Volunteers are the backbone of Whistlestop's services with 14,000 volunteer hours logged. Volunteers are treated like paid staff.

A collaborative effort is critical for success for non-profits. Village movement in Marin.

Leadership teams need knowledge and experience. Turn-over is high; must have a succession plan. Investors want to know your impact on the community; must measure impact. Determine long-term outcomes.

Strategic imperative: Evaluate each and every program for sustainability and make systematic decisions.

One in three adults is over age 60 in Marin. "The Silver Tsunami" means a growing demand for services and for understanding older adults' needs. Different age cohorts have different needs. A growing LGBT community in Marin faces difficult socioeconomic challenges. Need to get services out to reach more rural seniors as well.

Important to look at what you are, who you are and what you provide if you hope to obtain funding. Make sure to “tell the story” of how your senior center has helped individuals and families.